

# **Governor Haley Barbour to “UpGrade” Mississippi Education**

## ***Announces Education Reform Act for 2005 Legislative Session***

(Jackson, Miss.) Saying that it is time for Mississippi to start focusing on education fundamentals and not just education funding, Governor Haley Barbour today announced “UpGrade” – a massive set of education reform proposals for the upcoming 2005 Legislative Session in January. “UpGrade will be the most comprehensive look at Mississippi public schools since Governor William Winter’s Education Reform Act of 1982,” said Governor Barbour.

The package is highlighted by proposals to liberate Level 4 and 5 schools in Mississippi from state bureaucracy, give teachers and entire schools raises based on increases in student performance, redesign high schools to better prepare students for college and work, privatize non-education functions, allow for more youth court involvement in school discipline problems, and incent child care centers to offer more learning opportunities for children.

Governor Barbour announced the agenda at Northside Elementary School in Clinton to highlight his desire to move more of the focus of state education policy to the classroom.

“Many of these proposals focus on teachers because teachers are the most important component to a quality education,” said Governor Barbour.

“‘UpGrade’ is also about empowering local leaders and communities to be free of state bureaucracy so they can innovate and upgrade student achievement in their schools,” he added.

Governor Barbour hosted four education forums during the fall to get state and national ideas on how to improve Mississippi’s public schools. Governor Barbour formed the “Governor’s Teacher Advisory Council” that was attended by 200 teachers in September, held an early childhood education conference in Tupelo later that month, hosted the National Governors Association Teacher Forum in Biloxi in October, and culminated the activities with the Mississippi Education Summit later in October which was attend by 700 teachers, administrators, legislators, business leaders and parents and keynoted by nationally-recognized education reformer and former North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt.

**# # #**

**Attachment**

## **Upgrade: Put Teaching First**

Implement the final installment of the teacher pay raise package -- an 8% across-the-board raise for our teachers during the 2005-2006 school year.

### Pay for Performance

Include financial rewards, including future pay raises, for all faculty and administrators when their school demonstrates a high rate of gain for student performance.

Recruit teachers in hard-to-staff subjects like math and science by authorizing additional pay.

Financially reward teachers who serve as mentors.

### Recruiting and Retaining Teachers

Reform the state retirement system to encourage Mississippi's teachers to re-enter the public school classroom in critical shortage areas.

Make Mississippi the first state in the nation to honor the federal government's commitment to quality teaching by recognizing –

through full certification – all teachers from all states meeting this definition.

## **Upgrade: Student Discipline**

### Disciplinary Help for Teachers

Promote more mentoring to new teachers on discipline issues. Set a goal of 1000 new mentors for Mississippi's schools, with an extra focus on middle schools, where discipline problems are the worst.

Create a standing "Student Disciplinary Review Board" in each school comprised of faculty which will review discipline problems when a principal decides to send a disruptive student back to the classroom over a teacher's objections.

Reorganize the Mississippi School Safety Center into regional entities administered by Educational Service Agencies, making them eligible for federal funding which the Governor will seek.

### Holding Parents Accountable

Increase the enforceability of holding a parent accountable in the discipline process. If a parent refuses to participate in a timely manner in parent-teacher conferences due to their child's discipline problem a misdemeanor, they should be punished by increased fines, community service, or mandated attendance with their child in the classroom (current law is rarely enforced due to a lack of a time element).

## **Upgrade: Liberate High Performing Schools**

### Liberate High-Performing Local Schools from State Bureaucracy

Exempt Mississippi's highest performing schools, designated as Level 4 and 5, from all the process standards required by the State Department of Education's policy manual, as long as they maintain their high level of achievement.

Grant "Home Rule" to high-performing school districts (combined average ranking of all schools of at least Level 4), allowing these districts to be legally able to pursue their own education interests, unless the law expressly prohibits it.

Allow the State Department of Education to focus its resources and assistance on fewer schools, the ones which need the most help: Level 1, 2 and 3 schools in Mississippi.

Expand Mississippi's charter school law, which has been labeled the most restrictive in the nation, so local communities will be free to develop schools of learning tailored to their own needs.

#### Reduce Teacher Paperwork

Reduce needless teacher paperwork and bureaucracy by creating a task force of superintendents, principals, and teachers to review the entire Title 37 (public education section) of the Mississippi Code and the State Department of Education's operating procedures to identify all the rules and requirements which are not related to testing and fiscal accountability

### **UpGrade: Efficient Use of Resources**

Provide more transparency in education budgeting by itemizing all of the variables and add-ons of the MAEP district allocation and making it available to the public.

Give local school districts the express legal authority and encouragement to privatize local services to save funds.

# **UpGrade: Redesign High School**

## College Preparation

Establish the goal of making it possible for every student who desires to do so to earn a semester's worth of college credit in high school, saving Mississippi's parents thousands of dollars in tuition, and increasing the academic rigor of the senior year for Mississippi students.

Expand the impact of "Dual Enrollment" for high school students. Allow them to take classes at a community college or university while maintaining a high school curriculum and provide that all coursework be dual credit -- usable for both high school Carnegie units and post-secondary degree credit.

Insist that by the 2007-2008 school year, all public school 10th graders have free access to taking the Pre-Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT -- a nationally-recognized test used to measure students' ability to succeed in Advanced Placement classes).

Insist that Mississippi take advantage of federal funding to train Advance Placement teachers and utilize online AP instruction so that, by the 2007-2008 school year, all districts can offer their students Advanced Placement tests in core subject areas (at no cost to disadvantaged students).

## Vocational Education

Modernize vocational education programs by maximizing the use of already available federal Workforce Investment Act youth training funds and federal Perkins Act funds to help high school students obtain an industry-recognized certification while completing their high school coursework.

Encourage businesses in Mississippi to offer high school students at least a semester scholarship for industry specific training at community colleges during the fall or summer after their graduation in return for their promise (compact) to stay in school.

Establish a “High School Commission” comprised of the State Superintendent of Education, the Commissioner of the State Board for Community and Junior Colleges, the Commissioner of the Institutions of Higher Learning and the Governor to continue work on how to better align secondary and post-secondary education.

## **UpGrade: Early Childhood Development**

Require that state entities that deal with early childhood education be coordinated through the Advisory Board of the existing Interagency Council, which will be led by the Office of Children and Youth Services within the Department of Human Services.

Move more child care centers from “baby-sitting” to teaching by requiring an educational component if a center is to receive the highest reimbursement in state funding through the Department of Human Services for Child Care Certificates.

Develop a quality rating scale for childcare centers, based on an easy-to-understand star system, which would be implemented immediately and posted for parents.

Give the Department of Human Services the responsibility for child care licensing to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the reformed tiered reimbursement and quality rating system.

Form a task force composed of the Department of Human Services, the Department of Education, the cooperative extension service,

community colleges, universities and others to study the utility of a statewide Education Extension Service which will foster early childhood development skills and knowledge.